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discharge my duty to report the state of the state, I report that Nebraska has never been stronger, not so much by the revenues flowing into our state coffers, but by the character of our people who refuse, in the face of adversity, to give up or give in. In our state's history, we have seen over and over again that in order to survive our citizens have had to change how they lived and how they did business. So must state government examine itself and change. We begin with a budget deficit that must be addressed. The budget I submit to you provides balance with no tax increases. It includes funding for several priorities that demand our attention and our resources. I am pleased to present my budget proposal for your consideration. I also report to you today that in the next 60 days we have a historic opportunity to set the stage for our future, to do what's right for our entire state. So where do we begin? I respectfully offer to you that you have already begun this important task. With firm resolution, your Speaker, Curt Bromm, called on the state and his fellow senators to embrace long overdue reforms. The LB 407 Task Force was created by this body to examine Nebraska's tax structure and overall government and education structure. Your leadership identified the goal of the task force was to, and I quote, "take a long-range look at state and local governmental infrastructure and spending commitments with an eye toward balancing and prioritizing the cost of state government with a revenue system reflective of the current society." Now, we all recognize that legislation like this sometimes receives lip service but compels no action. That has not been the case. Examine the work that has already been done as a result of the task force charge, and in separate legislation. With the leadership of Senators Brashear and Dwite Pedersen, real reform came to the criminal justice system with last year's enactment of LB 46, the community corrections bill. LB 46 will better serve our citizens and provide reprieve from the cost of forever expanding and adding very expensive prison capacity necessary in the traditional bricks and bars approach to crime. Senators Preister and Schimek, the Government Committee, and others, asked for greater accountability in state contracts. They demanded the registration of contracts and an accounting system of checks and balances. LB 626 was passed. About two months ago, state departments reported to the Legislature about the success achieved in both areas.